Middle Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project—Design Phase

Lake County Flood Control
and Water Conservation District

Rodman Slough and the south end of the project area.

Award Amount
$135,818

Watershed
Clear Lake Watershed

County
Lake County

CALFED Region
Sacramento Valley Region

Legislative Districts
US Congress: 1
State Assembly: 1
State Senate: 2

Purpose

Preparation of a detailed plan with specifications and cost estimates to restore up to 1,218 acres of wetland and open water and 480 acres of floodplain of previously reclaimed land at the north end of Clear Lake.

Project Goals

- Restore wetlands and habitat.
- Reduce flood damage.
- Improve water quality in Clear Lake.
- Preserve existing resources.
- Enhance recreation and tourism.

Benefits to the CALFED Program

This project restores habitat and water quality at Clear Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake located entirely within California. Clear Lake is a naturally shallow lake and is the headwaters of Cache Creek, a tributary to the Sacramento River and Bay-Delta system. This project involves habitat restoration design for approximately 1,700 acres of wetland, open water, and floodplain habitats on Clear Lake. Completion of environmental documentation and design of the project will lead to implementation that will provide direct benefits to the Bay-Delta system. It meets CALFED Program goals to restore riparian, wetland, and open water ecosystems, and to improve water quality by improving flood control and reducing erosion and siltation to Clear Lake, which flows to Cache Creek and on to the Bay-Delta.

Project Overview

This project is the third of four phases in the Middle Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project. The overall project will restore up to 1,218 acres of wetland and open water and 480 acres of floodplain of previously reclaimed land at the north end of Clear Lake. Phase One, the Reconnaissance Study, has been completed and Phase Two, the Feasibility Study and environmental documentation, are underway. This project is Phase Three. It generates a detailed plan, specifications, and cost estimates of the selected construction alternative, in preparation for construction in Phase Four.

The project area was reclaimed from Clear Lake for agricultural and residential purposes between 1900 and 1958. Most of the land behind the levees is below the normal high water level of Clear Lake. Because of the soil type in the project area, the levees are subject to settlement and failure, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates that the current levees provide only 4 years of protection.

Restoration in the project area includes acquiring property below the 100-year floodplain of Clear Lake, removing structures and unnecessary infrastructure, retrofitting roads and utilities that pass through the project area, constructing passive recreation opportunities, constructing channels to direct flows through the project area, planting native plants, and breaching levees to allow flooding and flow. The area will be allowed to revegetate naturally and will revert to natural habitat after the initial years of restoration, increasing the shoreline habitat around Clear Lake. Restoration of flows from nearby creeks into the project area will result in settling some of the suspended sediments prior to entering Clear Lake, thereby reducing the nutrient loading in Clear Lake, resulting in improved water quality.

Project site looking to the northwest.

Contact Information

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